ALABAMA

THEIR GREATEST HITS AND FINEST PERFORMANCES

By John Alexander

With their unique blend of country, pop and rock, and their rich high harmonies, Alabama have proved themselves to be one of the most successful country groups of all time. They marked the new millennium by celebrating 20 years in the music business, having scaled both the country and pop charts with songs such as **Feels So Right**, **Love in the First Degree** and **Take Me Down***—all Top 20 pop hits. While most other performers from the 1970s and '80s can't get played on radio, let alone sell out concert halls and earn gold and platinum albums, Alabama is still setting the trends and breaking all records.

Alabama blazed onto the scene in 1980, and more than two decades later

* Songs in **bold** are in this collection.

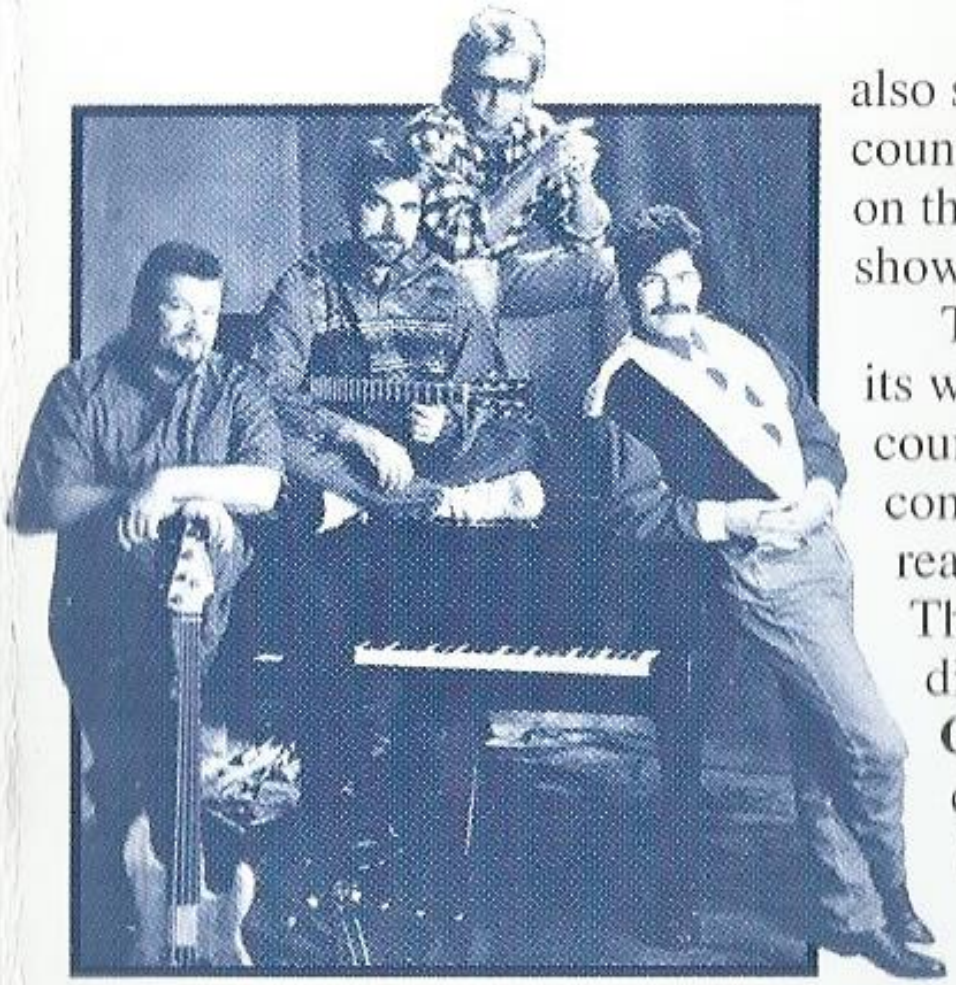
they remain a fixture atop the country-music charts. They scored 21 straight No. 1 singles, earned nine platinum and five gold albums, won three Country Music Association (CMA) awards for Vocal Group of the Year 1981–83, and were voted CMA Entertainer of the Year 1982–84. In 1989 Alabama was named Artist of the Decade by the Academy of Country Music and acknowledged as the most popular country group in history in terms of records sold.

Alabama, a supergroup in every sense of the word, is comprised of Randy Owen on guitar and lead vocals, Teddy Gentry on bass and harmony vocals, Jeff Cook on lead guitar, fiddle and keyboards, and Mark Herndon on drums. All are versatile musicians, songwriters and performers. Owen, Gentry and Cook are cousins who were born and raised near Fort Payne, Alabama, a town with strong country traditions. They began playing together around Christmas 1969 while Randy was still in school, Teddy was laying carpets and Jeff was working for Western Electric.

By 1973 the group had begun to hone their style, working for tips as a bar band called Wild Country in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In 1979 they added Mark Herndon and moved to Nashville, where they changed their name to Alabama. In 1980 they landed a recording contract with RCA.

THE NO. 1 HITS

After the group had established itself on the country charts, it wasn't long before pop radio took notice. Alabama enjoyed a number of crossover hits, including the smooth and sultry smash **Feels So Right**, a heartfelt declaration of love penned by Randy Owen, which stood firm atop the country charts for two weeks in 1981 and reached No. 20 on the pop charts. The song has become a Lite-FM staple and one of the group's most requested hits. The follow-up, **Love in the First Degree**, co-written by acclaimed songwriter and former Arista Nashville label head Tim Dubois,



also spent two weeks at No. 1 on the country charts and climbed to No. 15 on the pop charts, the group's highest showing to date.

The next year Alabama continued its winning streak with the No. 1 country hit **Take Me Down**, a contemporary-sounding tune that also reached the Top 20 on the pop charts. The group followed it up with the distinctly country-flavored ballad **Close Enough to Perfect**. The country audience responded by taking it all the way to No. 1. Two more country chart-toppers followed in 1983—**The Closer You Get** and **Lady Down on Love**. The latter, a hauntingly beautiful folk-influenced ballad, was penned by Randy Owen and remains one of his strongest compositions and finest vocal performances.

In 1984 the Alabama juggernaut continued with the rollicking **Roll On (Eighteen Wheeler)**. The song combined the finest elements of the country truck-driving saga with an inspirational story line. It's no wonder the song became yet another signature Alabama performance, considering it was written by acclaimed singer-songwriter Dave Loggins of "Please Come to Boston" fame. The group slowed things down for its next single, the tender ballad **When We Make Love** and then closed the year out with the scorching hit **(There's a) Fire in the Night.**

The No. 1 hits continued as the band ushered in 1985 with the ballad **There's No Way** and the workingman's anthem **Forty Hour Week (For**

a Livin'). The group had long since become identified with the common wage-earner, and this salute to the backbone of the American economy struck a chord with country fans. The song, another Dave Loggins co-write, was followed shortly after by the bluesy hit **Can't Keep a Good Man Down**.

The year 1986 brought the first of many refinements to the Alabama sound. They took a chance on a smoking, rock-influenced tune called **She and I**, yet another gem penned by Dave Loggins that reached No. 1. Country purists frowned on this selection, but Alabama's instincts were right on the mark. After attempting to broaden their style with **She and I**, the group seemed to leave country behind with their cover of the Carpenters' hit **Touch Me When We're Dancing** and its follow-up, **"You've Got" the Touch.** This was a far cry from their pedal-steel-rooted origin, but despite their forays into pop, the country audience continued to embrace the group.

The following year found Alabama joining forces with K.T. Oslin. Having just burst onto the music scene with her signature song "'80s Ladies," Oslin joined Randy Owen on the smoldering duet **Face to Face**, written by Owen and showcasing both their remarkable vocals to great advantage. Alabama opened 1988 with the hit **Fallin' Again**, written by Owen, Gentry and Greg Fowler. In 1989 they reached the pinnacle with the bittersweet ballad **If I Had You**, which benefited from a poetic lyric and another of Owen's heartbreaking vocals.

The group never lost touch with their country

roots and in 1990 released one of their finest stone-country singles, **Jukebox in My Mind**, a heart-wrenching, cry-in-your beer classic that remains their all-time biggest country charting record. It remained at No. 1 for four weeks and helped cement Alabama's status as an enduring supergroup. A few years later they would sit atop the charts for two weeks with the up-tempo cruisin' classic **I'm In a Hurry (and Don't Know Why)**, keeping the Alabama sound as fresh and current as ever.

SONGS OF THE SOUTH

Alabama has never shied away from paying tribute to its country roots. In fact, their 1980 breakthrough single, **My Home's in Alabama**, an homage to their rural upbringing, was a proud anthem penned by cousins and childhood friends Randy Owen and Teddy Gentry, who had grown up together on Lookout Mountain. There was something innocent and heart-breakingly honest about this song, which helped introduce the group to the country audience. That same year they released Owen's **Tennessee River**, a worthy sequel, and their first bona fide No. 1 smash hit. And it didn't end there—in 1982 the group released another Owen-penned classic, **Mountain Music**, a No. 1 smash that revisited the band's country roots.

In 1983 they sang the praises of Southern life in the hit **Dixieland Delight**, a salute to small-town life and small-town romance. Then in 1984 they picked up the tempo and released the smoking hit **If You're Gonna Play in Texas (You Gotta Have a Fiddle in the Band)**, a high-flyin' party song that showcased the group's musical versatility and especially Jeff Cook's incredible fiddle playing.

Four years later they once again revisited their rural upbringing in the picturesque ballad **Song of the South**. Like a Walker Evans photo gallery set to music, it evoked the region's history during the Great Depression and

beyond, and helped the group discover a new well of creativity and a new measure of credibility. In 1989 they released another hard-country hit, **High Cotton**, an infectious, up-tempo sing-along that recalled the group's collective memories of the South. This was directly followed by yet another slice of rural life in the poetic **Southern Star**, a hauntingly beautiful ode to the hypnotic power of a shining star that reminds them of home.

The group ushered in the next decade with two more tributes to the Southland—the nostalgic **Born Country** and the joyful **Down Home**, a smash hit that remained No. 1 on the charts for three whole weeks.

VERY SPECIAL LOVE SONGS

Alabama has always had a way with a ballad. Maybe it's because Randy Owen's tender vocals make the heartbreak songs sound so sincere and the love songs so romantic. The group has recorded a number of favorites, including **Forever's as Far as I'll Go**, which reached No. 1 in 1990, **Once Upon a Lifetime**, which made No. 3 in 1992, **Then Again**, No. 4 in 1991, and the breezy **Here We Are**, a No. 2 hit in 1991. They also struck gold with some timeless hurting songs such as **Why Lady Why**, a No. 1 favorite from 1980 and **Old Flame**, a yearning jukebox classic that reached No. 1 in 1981.

Alabama albums have always contained many hidden treasures. As a group they frowned upon the country practice of putting a few hit singles on an album along with filler material. They always prided themselves on creating entire albums of exceptional material, and buried among the hits have been such undiscovered gems as Randy Owen's heartfelt compositions **Carolina Mountain Dewe** and **Goodbye (Kelly's Song)**. Then there's the wistful **Is This How Love Begins** and the enchanting story song **Very Special Love**, one of the group's most unforgettable recordings.

BY REQUEST – THE HEART OF ALABAMA

Certain songs hold a special place in the hearts of both the fans and the group alike. They may not have all been top-charting singles, but they marked a milestone or had a lasting impact. For example, the song **I Wanna Come Over** was Alabama's first Top 40 tune and helped pave the way for all the hits to follow. Then there's the poignant ballad **Between the Two of Them**, which never charted but remains a personal favorite of Randy Owen, who has said that the song is Grammy-caliber material and one of their proudest recorded achievements. Other group and fan favorites include **Pass it on Down**, a No. 3 hit that was written in honor of Earth Day, and **I Saw the Time**, a striking narrative about the triumphs and tragedies that have befallen our country over the past century.

Alabama also tackled inspirational subjects on their classic recording **Angels Among Us**, which touched the hearts of fans from coast to coast; **American Pride**, an unabashed testimonial to their love for this country; and the classic holiday favorite **Christmas in Dixie**, a perennial seasonal standard.

This box set clearly reflects the legend and the legacy of a group that has changed the face of modern country music by adding an exciting new element of rock energy to the mix, while at the same time maintaining all of the proud tradition, history and values of country music's heritage. Alabama brought a new style and sound to country music along with a new look and a

fresh approach. The ensemble, which has won over 150 industry awards, sold 65 million albums and enjoyed an impressive string of 32 No. 1 singles, became the first group to win the CMA Entertainer of the Year Award.

Alabama proudly embodies the finest attributes of country music. They have enjoyed a career full of landmark achievements and remain one of the most popular and beloved groups of all time. From the beginning, they made it clear that they were a band of multi-talented individuals whose music would never be compromised. They have brought millions of new fans to country music and continue to refine and reinvent their sound and style for the brand-new century. They have proved themselves to be a supergroup in the truest sense of the word and continue to reign atop the country charts. Roll on, Alabama!

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